



Volume 1 / Issue 1

AGING AND DISABILITY CONNECTIONS

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DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Rebuilding Underway

The past few years have been hard on everyone: the individuals supported by our services; their families and friends; the agencies, staff, volunteers and advocates providing support; and public agency staff at OADS and in sister agencies across state government. Although COVID-19 is not fully behind us, we are now focused on rebuilding our system with an eye to the future. Armed with one-time funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), the Office of Aging and Disability Services (OADS) has launched several initiatives to make our array of services more resilient and innovative so they can adapt to a rapidly changing landscape. Many of you have expressed interest in helping and in knowing more about what we're doing. In this first edition of our newsletter, you can learn about a sampling of work under way and how to locate more information and stay in touch with us. Highlights include:

- RISE, an effective new model of support for individuals who have experienced abuse that has been endorsed in the [Elder Justice Roadmap](#);
- A \$10 million fund to support [innovation grants](#) to deliver home and community based services (HCBS) in ways that promote independence and true membership in our communities;
- [Caring for ME](#), a marketing campaign to attract more people to careers in direct care and support;
- The [Cabinet on Aging](#), created by Governor Mills to address the opportunities and needs of Maine's rapidly aging population; and
- A new self-directed service option for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and Autism.

Many of these initiatives were developed as part of Maine's [Home and Community Based Services Improvement Plan](#), which allocates more than \$240 million to HCBS Access, Innovation and Quality over the next three years. You can find links to OADS' major initiatives [here](#). Thank you for your interest. We look forward to working with you as we build a stronger system that responds to people's needs well into the future.

~Paul Saucier, Director



RISE MODEL RECEIVES ATTENTION

An exciting project involving Maine Adult Protective Services (APS) was recently [profiled](#) in the journal *The Gerontologist*. Together with researchers, Maine APS helped to develop the “RISE model” for working with older clients who have experienced abuse, neglect, or exploitation. “RISE” reflects a focus on Repairing harm, Inspiring change, Supporting decisions, and Empowering choice. Started in Aroostook and Cumberland counties and expanded statewide, this model focuses on an older adult clients’ goals and needs, and, if the client wishes, includes support for the harmer and/or the client-harmer relationship. RISE complements existing APS practices and fills an important gap in meeting the needs of older adults experiencing harm. We are grateful to have been able to participate in this project, and we continue to see the benefits of the program to APS clients.

A [second article](#) on the project involving the RISE model was published in the Journal of Elder Abuse and Neglect. The article discusses the RISE model and the Elder Services Connections program from the perspective of the Adult Protective Services caseworkers who make referrals to the program. The article is based on interviews conducted by researchers with APS caseworkers, and we thank the caseworkers who participated for contributing to this work!

The Elder Service Connections program is also being bolstered by a newly announced Elder Justice Innovation Grant through the Administration on Community Living. Elder Abuse Institute of Maine (EAIME) was awarded the grant over a two-year period in collaboration with Maine APS, as well as New Hampshire APS. The grant will allow EAIME to expand the RISE program to test a substance use intervention model called RISESUP and assist clients who are impacted by substance use in some way.

The Elder Services Connections program (a “wraparound service pilot”) was recommended for continuation in the [Elder Justice Roadmap](#) due to the demonstrated success of the program to date.

“Although COVID-19 is not fully behind us, we are now focused on rebuilding our system with an eye to the future.”

COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION GRANT

In the Fall of 2021, OADS partnered with the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to receive funding through the COVID-19 Immunization Grant. This is a three-year federal health equity grant, which aims to improve education and vaccination status for COVID-19 and flu among certain population groups in Maine, such as older and disabled adults, and adults living in rural areas. These are groups that felt the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic more than others.

OADS has partnered with many local organizations through this grant to better serve the people mentioned above. For example, OADS has helped to perform the following grant-funded activities:

1. The [Maine Long Term Care Ombudsman Program \(MLTCOP\)](#) and Ethos Marketing and Design have created the “Power of Care” Immunization Campaign. The goal is to increase COVID-19 vaccination rates among direct care and support staff in all Long-Term Services and Supports (LTSS) settings. The Power of Care campaign has launched a website -- <https://www.mainepowerofcare.com/>-- as well as a social media presence on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. In the upcoming weeks, Power of Care will be recruiting direct care and support staff leaders in long term care facilities across the state to serve as Power of Care Ambassadors as an additional strategy to encourage vaccination among staff.
2. The program works with [Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities \(IDD\)](#) care providers to establish vaccination clinics for individuals with IDD, their families, and staff. To date, this program has provided over 300 vaccinations and continues to serve the community. Inquire with your care provider to see if they are offering a clinic in your area – or watch the OADS Facebook page to see announcements about upcoming clinics.
3. This grant program includes an outreach effort to improve vaccine uptake among the service populations receiving LTSS. Questions specific to vaccine confidence have been added to the [comprehensive assessments that are completed for](#)

[individuals seeking LTSS through Maine's assessment services vendor, Maximus.](#) To date this program has provided outreach to over 2,000 individuals.

4. Maine's Service Coordination Agencies, SeniorsPlus and Alpha One, [help to arrange home care and other forms of LTSS.](#) Through this grant, these organizations are also providing vaccine support, outreach, and education for COVID-19 boosters and flu vaccination. To date this outreach has reached nearly 1,500 members across Maine.

These are only some of the activities provided under the COVID-19 Immunization Grant. OADS and the Maine CDC will continue their partnership under this grant, and work with these local organizations, and others, throughout the grant's expiration date of June 30, 2024.



APS CAMPAIGN

Adult Protective Services recently launched a public service announcement (PSA) campaign on radio stations around the state and on social media to encourage members of the public to be on the lookout for abuse, neglect, and exploitation of incapacitated and dependent adults and to report it. The PSAs will run periodically through the rest of this year. Remember: if an incapacitated or dependent adult in your life is experiencing abuse, neglect, or exploitation, please call 1-800-624-8404 or (207) 287-1234. The phone line is available 24/7 or you can make a report online [here](#).

Contact Us

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OADS@maine.gov

<https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/oads>

ATTENTION CAREGIVERS!

Have you heard about **Respite for ME?**

Respite for ME Grants, funded by the Maine Jobs and Recovery Plan, will allow caregivers to access respite care as well as other services not currently covered by existing programs. Eligible caregivers may receive up to \$2,000 to access needed services. You can learn more at the [FAQ](#) found on our website!

GOVERNOR MILLS LAUNCHES CABINET ON AGING

Governor Mills signed an [Executive Order](#) in June 2022, establishing Maine's new [Cabinet on Aging](#). The Cabinet on Aging was established to eliminate silos across State government, enhance communication, and accelerate actions and improved coordination to help every person in Maine age safely, affordably, in ways and settings that best serve their needs, including examining new modes of long-term services and supports. . Commissioner Lambrew of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and Commissioner Fortman of the Department of Labor are co-chairing the Cabinet, and it is supported by the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future (GOPIF).

According to the Governor's Order, the Cabinet will meet quarterly, and recently met in October for the second time. During the October meeting, the Cabinet reviewed the results of two listening sessions held on September 19th & 28th, discussed potential avenues for on-going stakeholder engagement, and received an update on the [Respite for ME](#) program.

The Cabinet has a [website](#) on the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future and plans to continue gathering input on its priorities through the end of this year.

If you have suggestions for cross-departmental issues that should be prioritized by the Cabinet on Aging, you can provide your input via this [contact form](#).

UPCOMING BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND CRISIS SERVICES REPORT STAKEHOLDER MEETING

The Department contracted with the UNH Institute on Disability National Center for START Services to conduct a system evaluation regarding mental health service experiences for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and mental health needs (IDD-MH). At this meeting, the researchers from NCSS will present summaries of data gathered and recommendations for enhancing and improving mental health and crisis services for people with IDD. System stakeholders, including service providers, people receiving these services, family members, advocates, and others are invited to this meeting with OADS and the National Center for START Services (NCSS)* on **Monday, December 5, 2022, from 11:00 AM to 12:30 PM.**

This meeting will be held on Zoom. Please use this link to register to attend:

<https://mainestate.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZUrc-6hqjwuGd0p11yEXNBjeYLxR5PCKLrg>

If you need an accommodation, such as real time transcription and captioning (CART) or American Sign Language (ASL) or other language interpretation, please contact Miranda Whalen at miranda.whelen@maine.gov by November 28, 2022.

*The Center for START (Systemic, Therapeutic, Assessment, Resources, and Treatment) Services at the Institute on Disability/UCED at the University of New Hampshire is a national initiative that works to strengthen efficiencies and service outcomes for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and behavioral health needs in the community.

CARING FOR ME CAMPAIGN

[Caring For ME](#) is a multimedia public service campaign that promotes direct care worker jobs as a career choice. The initial marketing work was lead by the Maine Department of Labor (MEDOL), which convened an external advisory panel of expert stakeholders to create a web page with resources. Using Maine Jobs and Recovery Plan (MJRP) funds, MEDOL created a web page explaining career pathways, a job board, training opportunities around the state, and lists of hiring events. The [Caring for ME Campaign also collected and produced 12 stories](#) of Home and Community Based Support (HCBS) specialists to give direct care and behavioral health workers a voice about the important work they do. DHHS is excited to build on MEDOL's [Caring For ME](#) campaign using one-time American Rescue Plan section 9817 funds to recruit workers into the HCBS field. All campaign efforts will work to promote recruitment and retention efforts and to raise the status of direct care and support work as a profession in long-term services and supports positions (LTSS) throughout the State of Maine. Stay tuned as we begin the next phase of Caring For ME! For information about other workforce initiatives at OADS, see our [workforce page](#).

WHAT'S NEW WITH COVID-19?

On August 31, 2022, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration authorized new Pfizer and Moderna bivalent vaccines to be administered to those who have already received the earlier primary series and recommended boosters. These new vaccines will "boost" immunity provided by the original monovalent vaccines and broaden immunity to include the Omicron BA.4 and BA.5 subvariants. These 2 subvariants are highly contagious and have been responsible for the ongoing new cases and outbreaks since late Spring.

As we enter fall and the upcoming flu season, it is important for everyone to update and maintain COVID-19 immunity. Here are some important facts to consider:

- Monovalent COVID-19 vaccines have been proven to be safe and have offered high levels of protection against severe disease. While the monovalent vaccines will no longer be available for boosters in those over 18 years old, they will still be used for primary series vaccinations in those still unvaccinated.

ATTENTION IDD SERVICE PROVIDERS!

Did you know that the COVID Immunization Grant program will **reimburse providers of Intellectual and Developmental Disability (IDD) services for hosting COVID/flu vaccination clinics?**

Eligible clinics should be focused on serving individuals with IDD, their families, and staff. A reimbursement of \$2,000 is available for clinic-related costs, such as provider staff expenses, clinic set-up, advertisement, and clean-up costs. The program will cover costs for two vaccine clinics per year, each being eligible for reimbursement (up to a grand total of \$4,000 for two clinics). If you would like to participate in the program or learn more, please email Megan Casey, the OADS Vaccine Outreach Manager, at megan.casey@maine.gov.

- Both new Bivalent Moderna and Pfizer vaccines can be administered starting 2 months following administration of a primary vaccination or booster.
- The Moderna Bivalent vaccine is approved for people 18 years and older.
- The Pfizer Bivalent vaccine is approved for people 12 years and older.
- Getting a bivalent booster after recovering from a COVID-19 infection will provide even more protection against future COVID-19 exposures. To maximize immunity, those with recent COVID-19 infection may consider delaying the vaccine by 3 months from symptom onset or positive test.
- It is perfectly safe to receive the new Bivalent COVID-19 vaccine at the same time you receive your flu shot. In fact, it makes sense since exposure to both viruses is likely.

For more information on the new Bivalent COVID-19 Vaccines, as well as how to find a vaccine location go to www.maine.gov/covid19/vaccines.

A PATH FOR ME ORIENTATION

Please join OADS for an "A Path for ME" orientation in December 2022. The focus will be on the start of the "A Path for ME" Lifespan Project and the upcoming start of the needs assessment. The needs assessments will be for Section 21 and 29 members and those on the waitlist.

There will be two sessions. Each will focus on the needs and interests of the following groups:

Waiver Members and Families/Guardians: December 13, 2022 from 4:00pm to 5:00pm

Registration link:

<https://mainestate.zoom.us/join/joinMeeting/register/tZAod--tqTwvGd3WkthQFwzd-feDONwe-W1#/registration>

Providers of Section 21 and 29 services: December 15, 2022 from 11:00am to 12:00pm

Registration link:

<https://mainestate.zoom.us/join/joinMeeting/register/tZ0qc-Ghqz4pEteeT9DfhCvEIBUIAexV-PvP#/registration>

If you need an accommodation, such as real time transcription and captioning (CART) or American Sign Language (ASL) or other language interpretation, please contact Miranda Whalen at miranda.whelen@maine.gov by November 30, 2022.

SELF-DIRECTED OPTION NOW AVAILABLE TO MEMBERS RECEIVING SECTION 29 WAIVER SERVICES

Self-directed services are home and community-based services that help individuals across all types of disabilities maintain their independence and determine for themselves what mix of supports and services work best for them. Self-direction provides individuals enrolled under Section 29, with a flexible budget that enables them to hire their own workers. This allows decisions about who is hired, when they will work, how much they get paid, and managing the worker. If an individual wishes to use this option but prefers to have another person manage these responsibilities, they can appoint a representative to act on their behalf.

Self-direction allows you to manage your own services and puts you in the driver's seat. You have choice and control over:

- The types of services you want
- Who will provide the services and support
- When the services or support is provided
- Where the services or support are provided
- How the service or support is provided

Services that can be Self-Directed:

- Home Support (Quarter Hour)
- One-On-One Community Membership
- Individual-Directed Goods and Services
- Assistive Technology Devices
- Home Accessibility Adaptations

If you would like to explore or start self-directed services, contact your Case Manager to discuss your options. Case Managers can send referrals or questions to referrals@gtindependence.com or call 1-877-659-4500.

Was this newsletter useful? Do you have suggestions for the next newsletter? Email your feedback to OADS@maine.gov.